

REMARKS

In the Office Action mailed September 1, 2009, claims 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8-20 were rejected under 35 USC §103 for alleged obviousness over JP 08293061 to Yoshida in view of JP 09099171 to Matsuda.

The previous allowability of claims 1 and 10 was withdrawn in view of JP '061 to Yoshida in view of JP '171 to Matsuda.

In this response, Applicant herein cancels claims 1-9 and presents clarifying amendments to claim 10. In view of the clarifications presented herein, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims 10-20 are in condition for allowance.

A. Rejection of Claims 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8-20 Under §103 Should be Withdrawn

Claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 have been deleted and so the rejection of those claims is moot.

Claim 10 has been amended to additionally recite that the vending machine also comprises "one manually driven manual operation means." No new matter is added by this amendment since support is found throughout the present application and particularly in paragraph [0022] of the US publication US 2007/0175911 or paragraph [0018] on pages 8-9 of the present application as filed.

In the Office Action, two references, JP 08293061A (Yoshida) and JP 09099171A (Matsuda), were newly cited. JP 08292061A discloses a vending machine comprising one article stocker provided with a plurality of article receiving paths. JP 09099171A discloses a vending machine comprising one article stocker and one manual operation means.

The vending machine disclosed in either of the cited references does not include a plurality of article stockers as recited in claim 10. The vending machine disclosed in JP 08293061A or JP 09099171A has only one article stocker. Accordingly, the vending machine described in the references has only one article moving mechanism that selects an article from among a plurality of articles stored in the article stocker and moves the selected article to the article guide path, and only one drive force generation/transmission mechanism that transmits a drive force to the article moving mechanism. Neither of the cited references disclose or teach a vending machine having a plurality of article stockers each storing a plurality of articles, a plurality of article moving mechanisms and a plurality of drive force generation/transmission mechanisms as recited in claim 10 as now amended.

Since the vending machine disclosed in JP 08293061A or JP 09099171A has only one article stocker, the article guide path and the manual operation means are intended for use with only one article stocker. Neither of the cited references disclose or teach the article guide path and the manual operation means which are used with a plurality of article stockers as recited in claim 10. If a plurality of article stockers were provided in the vending machine disclosed in JP 08293061A or JP 09099171A, it would be theoretically necessary to provide one article guide path and one manual operation means for each article stocker. Restated, there should be the same number of article guide paths and manual operation means as the number of article stockers. Therefore, two or more article moving mechanisms do not simultaneously move articles to one article guide path. In the vending machine disclosed in JP 08293061A or JP 09099171A, no problem will occur involving the article guide path becoming clogged with articles which have simultaneously been moved from two or more article stockers. Therefore, there is no need of configuring

the drive force generation transmission mechanisms such that two or more article moving mechanisms should not simultaneously move articles to one article guide path.

In contrast therewith, the vending machine recited in claim 10 includes one article guide path, one manual operation means, and a plurality of article stockers provided with a plurality of article receiving paths as specifically recited in that claim. As expressly recited in claim 10, p drive force generation/transmission mechanisms are correspondingly provided for the p article stockers to transmit a drive force to a driven portion by utilizing a force applied from the one manual operation means. As further recited in claim 10, p article moving mechanisms, which are driven by the drive force transmitted from the corresponding one of the p drive force generation/transmission mechanisms, are correspondingly provided for the p article stockers to move one of the plurality of articles stored in the p article stockers into the one article guide path. As additionally recited in claim 10, the p drive force generation/transmission mechanisms are constructed to prevent two or more article moving mechanisms from moving the articles into the one article guide path simultaneously.

With the configuration as now recited in claim 10, an article can be taken out of a plurality of article stockers with one manual operation means. In other words, one manual operation means can commonly be used with the article stockers. Further, when an article dispensing route is commonly used with a plurality of article receiving paths, articles do not get stuck in the article guide path and can smoothly be guided to an article dispensing opening. Thus, the configuration of a vending machine can be simplified.

In the Office Action, the Examiner did not address a feature recited in claim 10, namely, "each of the p article stockers includes m article receiving paths" as recited in claim 10. It is respectfully submitted that the cited references also fail to teach or describe this feature.

In summary, neither of the cited references JP 08293061 nor JP 09099171, taken singularly or in combination, teach or even suggest many of the features of claim 10 such as:

- "p article stockers (p is a positive integer of two or more) that store a plurality of articles";
- "p drive force generation/transmission mechanisms adapted to transmit a drive force to a driven portion by utilizing a force applied from the one manual operation means";
- "p article moving mechanisms, each driven by the drive force transmitted from corresponding one of the p drive force generation/transmission mechanisms to move one of the plurality of articles stored in the p article stockers into the one article guide path".

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 10 as now amended and claims 11-20 dependent or ultimately dependent therefrom, are patentable over JP 08293061 and JP 09099171.

B. Conclusion

In the event that the Examiner is still of the view that one or more claims is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 18-0160, our Order No. NIS-16742.

Respectfully submitted,

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